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MI Supreme Court to hear from former jurors

Updated: July 20, 2006, 09:31 AM EDT

KALAMAZOO -- Michigan's Supreme Court wants to hear from former jurors. The state's top court is looking at proposals aimed to help jurors make more informed decisions.

The list of possible changes includes allowing jurors to take notes to being able to talk about the case. Michigan's Chief Justice said the goal is very simple; to find ways to help jurors find the truth. "I think the Supreme Court wants to have uniformity in the state of Michigan," said circuit court Judge Richard Lamb.

Judge Lamb has sat behind the bench for two decades. He has seen the power of jurors first hand. "Jurors become judges they decide the facts what they decide is not reviewable."

Now the Supreme Court is considering a few changes, specifically for jurors giving them greater access in hopes of making smarter decisions. "I'll be the first to tell you the more information you have as a juror the better off you are as a juror," said Kalamazoo County Prosecutor Jeff Fink.

The other proposed changes are

- Judges schedule expert witnesses
- Panel discussion for experts
- Take notes in the jury room
- Jurors can ask to visit crime scenes

Then there is the proposal that has people talking. If accepted, it would allow jurors to talk about the case before the end of the trial, something the judge and prosecutor have serious concerns about.

"People form perceptions based on what they hear and then if they have to change perception once twice or three times I just think they ought to wait until they've heard everything until they make those decisions," said Lamb.

Prosecutor Fink's concern is jurors should not deliberate until they have been given a full description of the law which is not done until both sides have rested but he and Judge Lamb said it is a good idea to look for new ways to help jurors see justice is done.

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